

Cedar Rapids, Iowa

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Transcript

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The Bellevue contingent is here and my name is Don and I'm an alcoholic. But I am a member of Alcoholics Anonymous in good standing today. I haven't had a drink or a thought of a drink and that's all that takes. My current home group is the Denver Thursday Night Group. We meet in Denver every Thursday night. That's about eight o'clock. And I say a current home group because I'm a believer in the home group but I also know from life experience that I change, groups change, move sometimes or things happen. Well I'm still a member of that group. Two years ago I was a member of the Southern Pines Tuesday night Big Book group. So it's not as long as the Denver Thursday Night Group. That's where you'll find me on Thursday night unless something really important has come up.

Usually a death in the family. I was told that that can only be mine. I don't fully believe that but I'll go along with it. I want to bring you greetings from my mother and my wife. I should be home today. This is Mother's Day. But because of you, the ladies in my life have an understanding that goes beyond mine. A couple years back, well several years back, I was privileged to be serving you as trustees. I was at large and I was at large. I was everywhere but home all the time. My grandmother died and my mother's mother died and I had some place I had to be for alcohol economics.

And this was on Wednesday to Thursday and I ran down to Mom's and I said I'll just cancel the weekend. And she said don't do that. I said Mom, I'll just cancel the weekend. She said listen a few minutes Monday. I'm all right. We're not afraid of death in my family. We don't like dying much but this. She said you'd be back by Monday. And I said yeah I'll be back by Monday. She said then you go. You have an obligation to the living and I'll be okay.

My obligation is to the living because my life was given back to me as a pretty clear gift December 26th of 1967. And then I was brought to you, hand carried and delivered to you. So we might turn this gift into something meaningful and useful and shiny and worth something. And you've done that for me. So I belong to Alcoholics Anonymous. I have to tell you the truth Alcoholics Anonymous did not get me sober. God got me sober.

Five months later he brought me to you. And I figured I didn't want a guy bringing me. That's where I'm going to just stick around and see what's going on. And I wasn't supposed to come here. At the time that you found me I was certified by one government agency as a sociopath type 2. Bad business. I don't know what it is. I just know it ain't good. One government man said I was a psychopath. So I tried to say that I was a manic depressive drug addict. The truth was I was 133 pounds scared. Didn't feel good that morning.

My alcoholism is of a type that was so well hidden and nobody could see it. Not even me. And as I look back over my life I'm amazed because no matter what alcohol was a part of my life. When I was the super insurance salesman I went through that period going to be super straight on a little deck. I sold a 700,000 or 800,000 dollars with a new life premium on a debit 7 month period. I was on the way to getting into the millionaires club my first year.

Before I got that far I had to take my last paycheck and put it into the company and leave town because I hadn't learned that the money wasn't mine until it had been through their books. Went to Kansas City or San Francisco. Went to work for an IBM training school and in three months I was the sales director. In six months I didn't have a family. I was back on the street. We didn't know why. Screaming question of my life was always a problem with me. But we didn't see alcohol. It was too much a part of my life.

When I was super straight I was drinking. When I was super free I was drinking. I somehow made a decision that since I could never really be super straight I decided to be super free. I am one of the freaks that came out of Berkeley in the 60s. Throwing Owsley's acid rounds screaming out where there's dope there's hope burned down City Hall. On speed free. I am not a drug addict. Old speed free. Do I have some problem with drugs and that's all we need to talk about that.

But I say that because some of you need to know what you are. This year will work for anybody but it has to have a foundation of truth. So in the group I come from we spend enough time to help you find out what you are and all we can help you find out for sure is how you alcoholic. The book Alcoholics Anonymous is magnificent in that all of the symptoms of alcoholism are laid out so clean and clear that if you are one you can't miss it.

And if you are one of the types that still can miss it we have a guaranteed rate for you to find out for sure after you've been with us for a little while. We will suggest that you will try a little more controlled drinking. And really has anybody I have made that suggestion to have done it. The panic hits. That's all we need. They can say I could never do that. The guy was brought to you. Alcoholics did some interesting things for me.

I think of mayonnaise would have done it. I would have probably had too much mayonnaise. But what alcohol did was change me. And I came to alcohol needing to be changed. But I was 15 or 16 but I desperately needed to be changed because I didn't fit in. I come from a functional home. My parents are all still alive. My one brother is a professor of music at the University of Colorado. And probably the foremost synthesizer jazz musician in the world.

They call him out of the world. We just got back from Russia to do his thing. He grew up right down the hall for me. Nice to remember. My little sister, God bless her. She retired a while back from IBM as one of their topic decades. Made really good money and really great babies. And her babies have been busy making great babies. Because the young men of today are mostly idiots. We have not been able to find good husbands for most of those babies.

But in my family, the attitude in one of those baby shows up is, oh, isn't that nice? There's no little perch baby. Let's raise it. That's what I come from. And if you'd asked me to please tell us what kind of a family you wish you'd have been raised in, that's the one I got raised in. Despite some problems that the human condition brings on, I wouldn't change a thing. But I didn't fit it. I thought maybe my people had left me here and would be back from outer space someday and picked me up.

I didn't feel like you're human beings. So, I didn't think like you said you thought you had always high morals and standards and I didn't. You'd tell me you'll not do that. It's bad. It sure would be good to move. I was furious most of the time. I trapped down the simplicity of what I got furious was. I really got pissed. It stayed that way. And I know when it happened. I can't tell you the day, but I don't know exactly when it happened.

Somebody said no to me and made it stick. That's when it happened. I have a kind of ego who says, that's mine. It's all mine. If it isn't nailed down, it's mine. If it's nailed down, I've got a qua hammer. I am, it's my heart. selfish and self-centered, which caused me to be dishonest and greedy and a number of other things. But I want mine now. And the alcoholic mind that I carry has a terrible dilemma. You may recognize that the alcoholic war cry is, where's mine?

Mine. It's not big enough. It's the wrong color. There's not enough of it. That was my approach to life. Well, you can imagine the conflicts I've been to along the way. So by telling us 15, I was a mess. And as I write a passage where I come from, we've got the guys from our Air Force base to buy us a bottle of whiskey. We'll take it out east of Denver to drink it and get drunk and have fun, because that's what they said it would do.

Take this, go out east of town, drink it, and it changed me. I must tell you, I believe that I have always known that my answer would be spiritual in nature. But I've always been a spiritual thief, taking it from the outside and putting it in here so I would feel better. I thought that's what the spiritual life was about, was feeling good. If you're kind of new here today, please don't be deluded. When we talk about spiritual awakenings, we talk about them like they felt good.

Please don't think that's so. In the book Alcoholics Anonymous, which is my basic, it's the one that I was given, it's the one I used today, because it has all the answers I've ever needed. I've read other books and they all confirm what the big book says, but that's all I do. In that book the spiritual awakening and the spiritual experience, what it looks like, tastes like food like, is described over and over and over and over so I don't listen.

Now what happened to me the first time I took a bottle of whiskey out east of Denver and drank it, was that I had what Carl Jung describes as a spiritual awakening. It felt just like that. Ideas and emotions that were once the guiding forces and the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side, and an entire new set of conceptions begins to dominate them. It's exactly what alcohol did to me. Changing from a frightened, angry, timid, stupid, ugly, little boy.

I don't want a hell of a fine man in about three drinks. I don't have any questions that they were correct for centuries they've been calling alcohol spirits. Produces a sense of well-being and a sense of being here. Now it produces what seems to be a spiritual awakening. But I found that anything I can take from the outside and put in here is transient. It can and will and does go away. There's no permanent to it. I have found since you taught me how that what I find in here is mine.

You can't take it from me. We can argue over technicalities, but we never argue over what really happened. I can tell you what really happened to me. In fact, that's what I'll do this morning. But nobody can argue with that. It may not have happened to you if it happened to me. Well, it changed me. Forever it changed me. That evening it was alright for me to be done. And that evening I had plans. That's one of the differences between my alcoholic mind and my sane mind.

In my alcoholic mind, I'm a reactor. Life happens when I bounce off of it. I quickly reach for some kind of script to tell me what the hell I'm supposed to say or do or not do. By the time I find the right script, the actions are removed on. So I'm doing scene two with scene one script. No wonder I feel appropriate, inappropriate. It causes me to laugh at poodles and cry at hockey games. There's a wrong arena most of the time.

Trying to figure out, what is it you want me to be? I found out something about what you want me to be. You mostly don't give a damn. I remember sitting in my presence that one day when one of those flashes of truth came by me and that there were people on this planet that loved me no matter what I did. There were people on this planet that don't like me at all, no matter what I did. Most of the people on this planet don't even care if I show up.

And I knew I'm sane. Most of them don't care if I show up or not. And that's as it should be. Well, four years, it took me down to some strange paths. And finally, I just ran out of steam. Christmas wake of 1967, I was down to 133 pounds. Boy, his mother had taken off when Terry was two and a half and Sean was one. And we had been literally on the road for about four and a half years. Because Dad was restless, irritable, and discontent.

And we'd hit somewhere and I'd tried with all my heart to be a good father. And in the bottom month, we had to move. And we just tried it over and over again. I've never had a DUI because most of the time we didn't have a car. I walked this country with the boys and a sea bag and a couple of suitcases and a heartfelt pay. And I drank. Christmas wake of 1967, the phenomenal thing I needed to have happened happened. Now, I didn't hit bottom as I heard a lot of the stuff out here in AA.

I don't understand. So if I sound funny, please just know I don't understand. I hit bottom when I was 19 years old. I've never hit a worse bottom than I did at that. Because bottom for me is that time when I wake up in the morning and realize that everything I had in mind for my life up to now, it's not going to happen. And I did that so often, it's hard to locate it. Surrender was easy for me. I've been doing that all the time.

You just lay down your fighting tools because you've met something you can't beat. And you sit by the side of the road and wait until something comes by and tells you where to go next. I've been doing that all my life. Surrender I came to AA. I surrender. What the hell? That's easy. I just complied with whatever you said to do. I did it. If you're new here in the night, please be careful there. If you route what we have, do what we do.

If you don't route what we have, don't do what we do because you'll get it. This is an incredible deal. If you do this and if you're new and you're worried about am I going to do it right, don't worry. You're not. It doesn't matter. You're doing it at all. It works. I've seen it work for people who are deliberately not doing it. It works anyway. It works better if you cooperate. Anyway, what happened to that work is that I ran out of lies.

I didn't get sober because it was truth. I got sober because I ran out of lies. I got well because it was simple. I had told you that I was a pretty good father still. 133 pounds of speed break. It was stealing during the day to get enough booze to go to sleep at night. But we're doing pretty well. We haven't placed 11. It's warm and clean. We have food. That was crap. I was on federal parole for a little indiscretion that committed in 1966.

We were on age independent children because I couldn't work. We lived in a hobbler down in the basement beneath the lady that raised cats and she had cats everywhere. Her place was cleaner than mine was. I began to see that kind of thing. Coming from the home I came from, I don't know what Christmas is supposed to look like. It didn't look like that in my house. Christmas is a marvelous time in a sane home. They bring a tree in from the outside.

A real tree. Smell like spruce. We're decorated with lights and tinsel and with thread popcorn. It's so popcorn

together. It looks like to me. The house smelled good. There was cider. It was cinnamon sticks in. I have chocolate with marshmallows. I'm talking about real marshmallows. Not those sissy things. The ones that melt across the top and you have to go... before you can drink the chocolate. And the most painful memory when I thought about that and still think about that is what really happened at Christmas in my home where I grew up is that people came by to visit.

Probably the most important human activity that I am currently aware of is that I have learned how to visit. It's really hard for alcoholics. In order to visit, you have to be at least interested in the other person as you are in yourself. We just don't do that well. People love my parents and still do. And they would come by and visit. Tell nobody came by my house in 1967. Even my parole officer made me visit him. He wouldn't come by.

We were lonely people. Because I had made us alone. I thought I was alone and I finally created a world where that was true. I believe in magic. And we walked on Christmas. On the 24th we took a walk. We always had to walk. I could not sit still. We found an hour in the snow and took that to the Christmas tree place. We didn't have the tree because the welfare check hadn't gotten any yet. We didn't have any money. And they sold us the biggest tree on the mountain for a dollar that day.

I keep that memory intact. There's a little pain with it. I love it. Because the tree was about nine feet tall. And the ceiling was about seven feet tall. And we dressed it with garbage because that's what we had. I cut the bottom off of one of those little milk cartons and it makes the bell when you can. We just decorated it. Very kind man. Public merchandise. Martin Denver gave me a pair of cowboy boots and a shirt on credit so each of my kids had one present.

And my boys had wrapped up everything that would fit in blue paper towel and put it on the table under the tree for me. And of course that cracked me. There's something wrong here. On Christmas day we went down to my folks' place to spend the day with Grandma and Grappers. It never occurred to me that that couldn't happen. But we got there and Dad kept medicine. Then when I said, Don, I'm sorry but your mother said I can't let you in here anymore.

She can't stand watching you die. Now I would have told you that they leave me the hell alone. I'm not hurting anybody but me. And I saw the lie standing at that door. I was hurting everybody I never met. I saw what I'd done to my people and to my kids and to everybody I knew. And the lie just disintegrated. And then my dad destroyed my last lie because he snuck us into the basement. It worked so hard. Anyway, I believe that day that nobody cared.

Nobody loved us. That's what I told you. My dad made a lie out of that. And I didn't have any lies left. So I went home with an artful of self-pity. I asked the self-pity into the truth. And the truth for me, that day. And please, if you're going to be afraid of this one, it's the departure point. On that day, the truth was there was no reason for me to be on this planet. I was totally useless. I could think of no possible use for me in my life.

You cannot live in that state. Don't linger. There's only really one alternative. I still say there's two. You either surrender or you die. And I was surrendered out. I had nothing left to surrender to. I have tried everything along the way. I tried psychiatry. I knew it all wrong. I knew it all wrong. However, I went into diabetics back in 53. Now, there's good alcoholic, thank you. Your life's a mess. You just got out of your first penitentiary with a

bad kind of discharge from the Navy.

Nobody wants to talk to you. Took you wrong your life over the care of a science fiction writer. That makes sense. But for me, I've been baptized several times. I take it from the outside and put it in here to make me feel better. It won't be temporary. I had nothing left to surrender to. Didn't you have any hope? Just the truth. The truth was that kids wouldn't be better off if I wasn't there. They'd take them someplace where somebody would care for them, who cared about them.

I loved them deeply, but in my woke total self-centeredness, I couldn't care for them. So I did the only thing I could do. I took a two-month supply of the garbage I was currently using and shot it up my arm. A Dracula in the house and they done died. I haven't had a drink since. He's dead. He's gone. It's over. My first spiritual awakening did not feel good. I was reborn. It felt just like that. Everything hurt. Because when I woke up in the morning, not only did my body hurt, my mind hurt.

I was in a wonderful state. A complete failure at living and a complete failure of dying. Let me put you there. Okay. I laid down all my fighting tools. That hour was going to go anywhere anybody said and do anything anybody said. The men, I didn't have to be me anymore. And the police came. God's angels did not look like angels that morning. Oh, did they talk nice today? They really twisted me. They came with nine charges and the first one called for three years to life.

The Denver District Attorney told me that he'd bring me out of this one at a time. And I'll beat that when I was through. And I still owe the federal government five years of that little mistake in 1966. I was through and I really didn't care. I just went where they told me. I went up in the Denver County Jail in Detox and don't want to ever forget that. I had six weeks of food detox and headaches and the whole thing.

It was wonderful. I don't for a minute believe that the memory of that would keep me sober. I had worse than that. But that has made me a pretty good sponsor. See, if you come to me at the end of five weeks of cramps and pain and headache and teeth-gnashing and say, I'm going to die, I can say to you. With absolute certainty. Not yet. You've got a week to go. It's been very kind. Nobody's had to go past the sixth week.

I don't know what I'm going to say. If you come in the middle of the sixth week and say the same thing to me, I'll send you to keep you. There was a five-month healing time that was necessary for me before I was sent to you. Don't pretend to know why. I just know that's the truth. For five months, I laid in jail and healed. God sends me the wounded animals too. Need time to heal. I'm a big book fanatic. I believe in the big book process.

But I also believe sometimes we've got to nurse these folks along for a while before they can hear that. And our founders told us that it's imperative that a man's mind be cleared first. And that may take five days, that may take five months. I've got a couple of them that's taken five years. So we're nursing. Power of God went to work with my wife right then. I didn't understand God didn't know the word. I just know that looking back the power of God went to work.

Because when we came to court on my trial date, they took me into the room with my lawyer and said, we've been talking with the federal people. And we've all concluded you are really sick. So what's the point? I know that. I've known that for years. They said, if you plead guilty to this little reduced charge we have ready for you,

so we don't have to have this messy trial because it would have been a messy one. They would give you a one and a half to three-year sentence and then suspend it and give you back to the feds.

They've agreed to take you. I owe them five years anyway. And I'll take you to the hospital in Fort Worth, Texas, and fix what's wrong with you. I saw it right there. I'm drunk, not an idiot. Two things went off in my mind. There are always at least two of me at work. If you're worried about the voices inside, get to know them. They ain't going anywhere. Get family. I knew if you put me in a hospital with doctors and books that I would be on the street the six months.

I know the process. They would tell me what was wrong with me. They would tell me about how long they expected to take to fix that. They would tell me clearly all of the symptoms I'd have to show them to convince them I was getting better. We're playing my game now. I've been doing that since I was little. The other side of me, I was truly wanting to go anywhere anybody said. So I signed. And the deal was made. I went to court in my plug building.

They reduced the charge and gave me one and a half to three. And suspended it and gave me back to the federal people who've already agreed to take me. The five days later, I was in the first tank of a car I would say, fantastic. About the grace of a loving God. I had truly surrendered. And I was brought to you. Because here's what I belong. And you didn't look all that nifty to me. They sent three guys over with numbers on their chest, green uniforms and numbers.

I didn't have a name at the time. I was 38, 984. I was back when they still took your name away from it. You lost it. Guy got up, these three guys now. Understand that convicts in their natural habitat make you a little nervous. Smiling convicts are intimidating as hell. These guys had that smile that says we know something you don't know. And if you don't hear it the first time, you may not live long enough to hear it the second time.

So they said, you'll come down and listen. We did. We came down. I didn't have anything better to do that day so I listened. And if you're new, that's all this is about. Listen, God has made me a listener. Keep not talked about this. We think it's funny that we have to talk so much. We're listeners. What I heard was this. Guy got up and he said, my name is Doc. And I'm an alcoholic. And that means that I am powerless over alcohol and drugs and drugs and all of the circumstances in my life and my life has become unmanageable.

And if any of you smart bastards think you can still manage your lives, look at the world of state just gave you for the nifty job you've been doing. Truth without love is cruelty. Confrontation without a real answer is mortality. But these two people loved us as we were, where we were, before they ever knew our name. And they had a real answer. So number was I giving everything but just a clean, straight ahead on truth.

I said to Bruce one time, Bruce, I'm terrified of my mind. He said, you have good reason to be. That's the truth. There was no making noise on that. I have been continuously sober since December 26 of 1967. And the reason I tell you that is not to glorify me or a if to help you. If you're new here, get past one of the new myths in a truth is relapse is not part of recovery. It's not necessary. If you're alcoholic, you don't ever have to drink again.

We can promise you that. Some of you will relapse. I don't get them. You don't have to. You don't have to. You don't have to. 20 years you've got to have to. I don't know what people 45 and 50 years sober haven't had to.

The guy who told me about breathy back again. My first response is running. The one who had more influence on my life than anybody else. But he is the one who taught me to worry about what anybody else does.

What are you going to do? I didn't take it from the outside and put her down. He showed me how to open up inside for myself. Who's an interesting man? If I had to identify with what it was like and what he had done, I wouldn't be here. Because in a drunken age, when he was 17 years old, this man killed a couple people in the shoot-up in a robbery in downtown Denver. I'm a snake thief. I'm not a gun-toter. God, I'm not real early.

If you put a gun in your hand, somebody thinks you may use it. They sure shoot back at you. Not me. Keep me with hands, you're my weapon. I'm, like, really interesting document. Yeah, well, never mind the statute. It may not be up on that one. We've talked about what he felt like that morning. What happened to him that morning? Is that I identified with? He woke up with a feeling that nobody cared when his liver died.

And the pain of that was such that he took his medicine to kill the pain, and that day it didn't work. It intensified the pain. And there's only one legitimate response to that kind of being along where nobody cares. Rage. And drunken rage, he kills him, people. Well, I've done all bizarre stuff, but I identified with that, particularly the drinking. He'd been in a kind of country since he was 17 years old, and I think he did nine, ten, eleven years, and they broke him out.

A spiritual human being has never met. I walked. He walked the law. Three weeks later he was drunk. And I've talked with him since. It's real simple. What got him was, where's mine? I missed something between here and there. I couldn't do what he had to do without drinking. And he drank. It took him nine years to get home. He's going to tell me it's in here. It doesn't matter what anybody else does. They told me about the disease of alcohol in here.

I have it. I was in my first federal penitentiary when I was nineteen, because when I drank I get lost and can't find my way home. And at that time I was in the Navy and that's the felony. They gave me a 24 hour liberty and I came back twenty-three days later. Off the drum. And then the doctor's opinion I'm described right to the TV. Talked about men who'd been working on a business deal would be settled favorable over there.

On a certain date they had a drink a day or two before and then missed their appointment. I had a 24 hour liberty. My appointment was due at twenty-four hours. I had a drink of alcohol in Long Beach, California at twenty-three days later. I was in Pershing Square in Los Angeles drinking. One sudden I didn't have to do that anymore and I went back to the ship. But for twenty-two days I had to do that. I had my choice.

I'm absolutely appalled when I go to LA meetings and somebody comes back after drinking. I hear someone say, well, I must have wanted a drink more than they wanted to stay sober. And I called and they showed a terrible lack of understanding, I think. They had a choice they shared how women done that. There's no choice involved here. Once I start the choice is gone. And unfortunately there's no choice anyway. And the time I took my first drink I've never had a choice.

Twenty-eight years sober, the choice I did not choose not to drink this morning. That choice has never been given back to me. Thank God. Every time I had the choice I made the wrong one. Although I drank a hundred, none of my business. I gave that to God if God didn't big enough to handle it. I'm cooked. I can't believe he is. I

came to believe in the power of God because I saw walking around. There was nothing esoteric out there to pause about it.

There were three men who had been totally changed. That's all I came for. I didn't know I needed sobriety because I didn't know I was alcoholic. But I knew I needed to be changed. Bruce didn't kill people anymore. He couldn't. Even in that state I knew when he told me that story. The guy telling me the story was not the man who had done the deed. He was a different human being. He couldn't kill anymore. When I asked him about that, he said, that's right.

I've been changed. God changed me. I didn't care who changed me. He'd been changed. Ron Nichols couldn't stick people up and take their stuff away from him anymore. He'd been changed. Old Toby Terrace taught me about the governor. He came to us from Guam when he was 17 because they couldn't continue on the island anymore. I met him in the Colorado State Penitentiary after he'd been there for seven years. The Colorado couldn't contain him either.

Here's the sweetheart of a man. A mean-looking dude. Just a mean-looking dude. But Phil's the one who taught me how to touch physically in a penitentiary. Or that's a little risky. The Phil's touching was of the spiritual kind and you knew it. Phil was healing. He knew it were all a bunch of puppies. We need padded and headed. And what do we do here in A? Yeah, we just have to pick up. Keep it up. Please. I need it. He had been changed.

Phil was doing time down there because on his last job he threw some people out of a three-story window. That's the kind of guy Phil was. He was changed. He was soft and gentle and calm and tougher now. Phil lived not much on principle. Anyway, these guys were an example to me of the power of God in the flesh. Walking around. And so I just did what they said. I figured okay. My sponsor did not give me a new concept of God.

My God. He destroyed all my oldies. Deliberately. Took me aside one afternoon. Took me in the shape. We had come to the idea. First of all, he said you're not a sociopath and a psychopath. You're just a good actor. We found a whole kind of insanity. I suffer from and destroy the car sales, the name Jim. He thought he could put an ounce of whiskey and his milk and be all right. Phil Brooks says whatever the precise definition of the word.

We call that plain insanity. How could this lack of proportion of the ability to think straight be anything else? That's what I suffer from. A lack of proportion. A lack of the ability to think straight. I cannot to this day on my own think straight. Everything was floated through my ego. Which warps it. It's only by letting God direct my thinking that I can think straight. That's another calling. My brothers and God at that time have to do a Santa Claus.

What's he going to do today? I stand here before you this morning and tell you the value of my life today. I quit saying do this for me. I learned to say, what can I do for you? The differences I'm here before. But I had to get rid of all those old Santa Claus ideas. He just wiped them out. I was curious that day. I can still remember yelling at him. You're asking me now to surrender to nothing. Go ahead, nothing left.

Yeah. Laugh and say why not? Nothing can run you alive better than you've been doing. God is a smartass. Then he went for the heart because he knew I had one final reservation. I really believe at that time that if I gave

my wife entirely over to the care of God, he had more for me to do. That's what he kept saying. I didn't want to do it because I knew what it was. If I truly surrendered, I'd end up at the corner of Colfax and Broadway and Denver handing out watchtower magazines and asking perfect strangers.

Have you been saved better? And I dropped the guy doing that. I couldn't see me doing that. And I told him that. And he said those magic words. Let's talk about that. If you know where I need to tell you, let's talk about that. Does not mean let us talk about that. It means listen. Because he had a real answer, he went for the heart. He said, Don, he spoke with the guy that's handing out watchtower this morning. Had breakfast where he wanted to.

And I said, probably. He said, well, you didn't. He spoke with that guy that's humiliating himself down there on the corner. He was wanting clothes that he picked out to do with him. And I said, probably. And he said, you're not. He spoke when he's all through, making a fool of himself. That he gets to go home. I didn't. We have promised here a new mind. The illness took that big damage. I promised a new one. And my sponsor hand carried me into it and laid the foundation.

And the foundation of my new mind is very simple. Anything at all that God may have in mind for me is better than anything at all than I will ever have in mind. That man, I don't get dreams and aspirations. I just check them out. I really live that way and have for 28 years now. They're an adventure. I do him perfectly. Sometimes I'm calling and kicking and screaming. I call him a bully one day. Well, I don't care what you call him as long as you do.

She's been digging up to have a bully. Let me tell you the contrast. It's so easy for me to see the contrast. When I ran my life, when I gave it every ounce of everything I had in me, everything, I ended up living in a neat by ten toilet talking to cockroaches and my children were in a foster home and my mother was not able to see me on Christmas Day. That's the very best I can do. Sometimes I gave it to God. Whatever he has in mind, I got.

The world has become mine. I have been all over this world, literally. I've been to Russia. I've been to Guatemala, to Puerto Rico, and Canada, and the United States. I've got to look at me this morning. I'm at Cedar Rapids Island. If I hadn't made a list of places to go, y'all wouldn't have been honest. And that's not because this is a bad place to go. It would never have occurred to me that in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, what's what my heart desired the most.

It's true. You've given me something this morning. I didn't have one. I got here. Some of my God decided where I go. I put the tall, willowy, sexy maw. Very needy types. Warm me out. I quit doing that. Why'd you pick the next one, boy? In fact, if it's all the same to you, I don't even need one. I lived at the base of a 14,000 foot knot in the Arkansas River in the front yard. Two teenage boys, a black dog, a white cat, worked at the reformatory six hours a day, and the rest of my life was mine.

So I could honestly say to God, I really don't care if somebody interrupts this deal or hot. This is pretty good living. Two weeks later, I met a sane lady. We've got a tired lady who didn't need me at all. We have been successfully married for 19 years without one fight. But you taught me something. If I start to defend my position and my voice goes up that much, I'm already wrong. I never disagree with her. She thinks I'm the cutest thing she's ever seen.

I agree. I honest to God, get frustrated here. I have been living really conscious of the presence of God in my life, as my life, for 28 years. Which means that every day of that, something incredible has happened and I want to tell you about it, I'm already just about out of time. And I can't tell you about all of it. I've done about 10 minutes left and I want to use it to tell you some really important things that are, in my experience, living the spiritual life.

You've heard one of them. I've commitment here. My commitment to my life is simple. I marry her because I want to grow old with her. That's the reason that wasn't enough. It's a good start. That wasn't enough. What happens on the plumbing doesn't work. I'm going to be there. In fact, I told her here's the commitment. If you want me out, you're going to have to put my stuff on the porch and call the sheriff, because I ain't going to.

And that's commitment. There are days when it hasn't seemed like the best choice. She also had two little girls that I got to raise. I'd already raised seven. I'd done my fair share. These girls, Daddy, was a Denver vice squad detective. Never said a bad word against them. I don't have any bad words to say against them. I don't have any words much at all. I got to raise those kids. I didn't want to do that, but let me tell you a little story that I don't miss.

I just want you to understand, please don't miss these kinds of things, because this is what sobriety is about. I love working with my grunts, but the life behind it is what this is about. My little one, I've got a really mouthy one, a stepdaughter, Kelly. She's a political activist, and she'll up in your face in a flat second. I just love her to pieces. But we didn't always get along too good, because I'm a little mouthy.

I don't have opinions. I'm right. So, we had some interesting discussion. She had a collision when she was about 12 to have to write a piece at school on her bed. She picked me. And she put my picture on this thing and did, you know, how they are when they 12, put this book together. And I got to read that, and it was seven pages of some of the native stuff I had ever seen. I was really glad to know me that day. If you never get a chance to see yourself through someone else's eyes, good or bad, it's really a trip.

Last paragraph rocked me. She said if I would have had a choice, I would have picked Don for my dad. Well, I didn't have a choice. So, God picked me. You brought it. I understood that. That's what that one made either. I heard a choice. I had a picture, but I didn't have any choice. So, God picked you and brought me to you. You don't want to miss things like that. One morning, I promise, Kelly, I'll tell you this one.

One morning after my morning meditation, that's probably the best one in all these years. I was just kind of moving half inch off the floor through the house. And Kelly and Lisa were in the kitchen early teens. And I don't know if you've been around two girls. Damn, they can get me. And they were main mouth. And I did a really stupid thing. I said quietly from my lofty perch. Please don't. I didn't know that there's no girl talk.

That means, oh, daddy wants in the game. But the volume went up. And I got my feet back on the floor. And did another really stupid. I said, knock it off out there. Oh, we got him now. So they went to the lake. And since I'm in the game, I went to the lake. I said, they ran up the stairs going, hehehehe. And my house, because the spiritual life requires some solitude and privacy. If the doors are closed, unless the house is on fire, we won't mess with you.

It's really important. So they went into their rooms and slammed their doors. I bounded with a single leap. Screaming at the top of my lungs, if we're going to slam them, we're not going to have them. And I'm taking the doors off the table. And they're laughing and kicking on. And I killed the doors down to the basement. They went on to school. And I hooked the basement stairs. The doors were much heavier. And that thing in my head that guides me said, Wait, don't tell me.

You've done it again. You gotta carry these right back up there. Rehang them. When those little girls get home, you have to. Hell, I hadn't done anything. Anything in my character that will separate me from my children also separates me from God. And he hung a separate me from you. And so this became a really critical thing that I had done. It's fun to talk about. But my life was on the line. And others' lives are on the line.

So I did what I'd been taught. I wrote down the reasons that that threatened me. Why would their behavior threaten me? When I found it, total sauce. They were creating a stirrer in my sanctuary, the peace and harmony of life. I forgot they lived there, too. So we did the inventory. I did the fifth step. My sponsor. We talked about it. I made the Amanda apologize to them. And to finish off them is what I do now, when they get out of hand, I send myself to my room.

It's a whole lot even. This is Mother's Day. And I want to tell you how I watch God take the very worst thing I have ever done. In my mind, turn it into a temple of healing for hundreds and hundreds of people. It took a long time to get square with my mom. How do you say, Mom, I wish I hadn't made it necessary for you to tell me to go away on Christmas today with the kids? There's no possible way I could have figured that out.

You taught me what I have to do with listening while the people tell me how to get square. And I'd become a listener. And months after I got out, my mother let me come by the house very reluctantly. I truly, my approach to amends is simple. I find you. I know that. Here's what I think I did and what I think I ought to do to fix it. No, you please tell me what I really have to do so we can get square. And I found a way to ask her that.

And she said, honey, all I've ever wanted for you is that you'd be happy. So for the last twenty-six or so years, I've been going by my mom's house on a regular basis happy. The deal is regular and it worked. And as a result of patching that back up, they say I travel a lot. And I think the worst thing I ever did, Barnan, was the day out of my own grade and need and maintenance, I stole her \$2 bill collection so I could get drunk.

She didn't even know it because it was tucked away back somewhere. I was so, I didn't have the nerve to go steal from anybody else. It just ate me up. Well, when I came around to try and straighten that up back in the late 60s and early 70s and they took two dollar bills off the market, they weren't being used. So all I had to do was tell her about it and on up to it, but I couldn't replace them. Seven years ago, my god, it must be ten years now.

I had occasion to be down at Charlottesville, West Virginia, Virginia. Anyway, Tom Jefferson's wife found that they were back in circulation. They had cases of them there that were, you get them for change for souvenirs because Jefferson's pictures on the two dollar bill. So I bought sixteen bills to replace them with the headstone. I love to get a crowd response so I told them about it and we all had a good cry. Yeah, took them home again, the mom, the deal was done.

Two weeks later in the mail from down there in West Virginia, and all the return address, I got a letter go to

the whole bill. And I got to have the experience of anonymity. I got to be touched for what was happening. That's how it is with us sometimes. It's not the direct, somebody else had done that. And for whatever the reason, they could not make the recommendation, they could not get free. So by coming through me to my mom, somebody else got free.

I became the champ that I've always wanted to be. And in the last ten years, I can't tell you the number of bills that she's gotten. I quit telling the story. Somebody said to me one time, you keep telling that she's going to be a ritual. And they keep coming. And what my mother does with those is even more powerful, I think. My sister says she uses that to tell people about A. She thinks we're really strange. She likes us, but we're strange.

She said people will come over and she'll bring out these two collections. She's got the ones, the 16 I gave her, plus one I gave later. Somewhere I woke up to the fact that you go one past that. And then she drives out the other one. And the bill that you all give her, she doesn't straighten out putting any files. She keeps them as they come. Some are crumpled, some are folded, one was made into an origami bird. There's a quick little paper clip on where they came from.

She's got them now from some more, Canada, the United States. She brings these out and she says, each one of them, because this is what I told her. Each one of these represents someone being free from a tunnel disease. Somebody getting free in their spirit. My son's part of that. Last thing is fresh. We've had to put Dad in the home filing. He's just too much for. They think he has Alzheimer's. I think they're crazy.

There's nothing wrong with him. He's just tired. We got him 86 years old and he's worn himself to a travel. And his memory's not so good anymore. He's smart as I am, but he's memorizing to this. Anyway, we had a big family conference with the doctors and all that, and it was decided. It was best that he'd be there in the home. He also had to have some lower track taken out, so my brother and sister, blessed their same harp stinks that he can't eat the same thing he used to.

It's not good for him. He's 86 years old and dying. I didn't need whatever the hell he wants. It's too late. So I sneaked him in that food. Oh, yeah. I bring the cheetos in and they sneak them out again. I bring them back. Anyway, at this meeting, he asked the doctor. He said, can I close the house with Charlie? He loves Charlie. And she told me. She said, Mr. Pritts, you didn't see anything you wore. So we took him to daddy.

They have Charlie. That whole family is sitting around on sitting next to him and we're visiting. And they tell me he's been doing funny things with his food. Like putting man-aids and the lemonade and stuff. But I've never seen that. They just tell me that's what he's doing. So we're visiting and I'm not eating his chili like an old old man does. Really little small. And then he picked up one of those great jelly containers.

He's getting ready to put the jelly in the chili. Indeed. So I've hired Vanessa, Mike. Got a hold of muffin and I put her over on her. You know, Pop, I believe that tastes better if you put it on there. So I took her spoonful with the chili and put it on her. Then he looked me right near. He either said, that's what it's about to be. I don't want to miss those moments. You know, there's been glasses and I want to be current with him today.

But when he goes, I don't have to stand in grave and say, I wish I'd have said it. But I can tell you to the best of my knowledge. There is no one on earth that I will have to mourn over a grave and mourn what I didn't do. I

will mourn her passing. But as of this morning, to the best of my knowledge, I'm square with you all. Now is the time we have fun because now we can go the one extra. For all the serious stuff we have to do here, the main thing we do here is what has to do.

I've been asked to close with Australia, I haven't used for years, so I will. No, I won't either. I found a better one. My little brother and I took 22 years to make peace. I really damaged my little brother. I was his hero. I betrayed everything there was about that. Everything. I hurt our family. I hurt him. I hurt me. My brother had a hard time. He was talking to me. Twenty-two years sober. He hadn't had my life on over for dinner and when we were all through.

He said, Don, I'm not sure you and I could ever be friends. But this was nice. We can do this again. So over a period of time, it began to develop. Well, I had a case in the thin North Carolina for two years and I visited home frequently and when I go home, I start by the folks' place. That's what I do. And he came in and we were sitting there visiting and suddenly he kicked me on the bottom of the shoe and he said, Don, you know, I'm really glad to see you.

And he really was. He said, Listen, next time you're in town, let you and I go up to the cabin. We have a little cabin up there for a while. We'll do some fishing. Well, I made a trip. And then I went to the cabin. We did a little better fishing. We just scared some brookies. Better fish. We went back to the cabin and played cribbage and talked. I am scrupulously honest in all of my activities except games. Cribbage is an institution game and he forgot that.

I did the only thing that's reasonable to do on those circumstances. I reminded him that he had been years since I played. And that he would probably have to teach me how to count all over Canada. What I did was get him playing ball hands and you can't lose if you do. And we talked. My little brother gave me that day the most precious gift I have ever been given. It's the most precious gift any of us can give to anyone else.

He took from within himself who he thought he was. And he showed that to me. You don't just do that to anybody. He said, Now I want you to know something. I said, I'm 58 years old. And I believe I have made a decent contribution to life. And the other part of the gift for me is that I've been trying for years to find something in the statue David's story with one of the ways. Kind of find a way to tell you precisely how I feel about you.

I was morning, I'm 62 years old. And because of you, I believe I've been able to make a decent contribution to life.